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ABSTRACT

The success analysis approach consists of individual and group exercises through which participants, in sharing meaning-centered experiences, identify their strengths and needs and clarify values operative in both past and expected successes. This approach constitutes a rational and practical perspective whereby students, teachers, staff, and administrators can engage in cooperative and creative efforts compatible with a multicultural emphasis in education. The staff of a school district recently explored this thesis by participating in a success analysis seminar, which was later evaluated. Results of the evaluation indicate that the success analysis approach was highly successful in stimulating free and open interpersonal and intercultural communication, valuable personal insights, acceptance and appreciation of the personal values of others, and better understanding of self and others. Less success was achieved in the areas of needs identification, values clarification, and goal setting. (Author/JG)

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SUCCESS ANALYSIS FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

by

Elihu Carranza, Ph.D.

Introduction

The Superintendent of a Santa Clara Valley school district located in San Jose, California, his administrative staff, and the principals of the nine schools of the district recently participated in a seminar in success analysis. The seminar sought to acquaint the participants with a transactional perspective of the communication event compatible with an emphasis in multicultural education. The results follow.

From a transactional perspective, the communication event is significantly affected by the participator's perceptions of strengths, moods, needs, goals, beliefs, values, attitudes, assumptions, past experiences, etc., as well as any other spatial, temporal, psychological and environmental factors which affect meaning-creating, and thus, behavior. The assumption is that behavior is a function of one's perception of oneself as well as one's perception of the situation-as-it-happens.

Approach

Briefly, the success analysis approach consists of

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individual and group exercises by means of which participants, in sharing meaning-centered experiences, identify their strengths and needs, and clarify values operative in both past and expected participant achievements or successes. Such an approach creates opportunities for the kind of interpersonal communication that fosters a creative understanding of a person's own life-style, as well as the life-style of others. Moreover, the approach is nonthreatening, for it emphasizes and explores the positive in contradistinction to the negative aspects of past or expected experiences. Finally, a synthesis of an individual's strengths, needs, and values is accomplished in this seminar by setting a goal within the area of multicultural education.

Rationale

Traditionally, in the analysis of ethnic groups little or no consideration has heretofore been given the strengths, needs, values and, generally, the potentials and successes of culture group members. Yet to study merely the negative aspects of a group or culture represents a limiting and limited approach in multicultural education, often yielding derogatory and plainly false stereotypes. Enlightened educators have come to recognize this as a source of needless shame and humiliation, the comsequences of which negatively affect the educational climate for all students.

The success analysis approach, by way of opposition, assumes that if one can learn from one's failures, one can also learn from one's successes or achievements. Successes

or achievements are not fortuitous; i.e., certain strengths, needs, and values are operative in their accomplishment. (Similarly, failure analysis is likely to reveal the unused strengths, unfulfilled needs and/or conflicting values of persons which collectively constitute a matrix for failure.) Knowing this, should not educators fashion program changes such that the strengths, needs, and values of those involved are effectively incorporated into goal setting processes yielding high probability of individual successes as well as the achievement of program or organizational goals?

Such an approach constitutes a rational and practical perspective for educators whereby students, teachers, staff, and administrators are able to engage in cooperative and creative efforts compatible with a multicultural emphasis in education.

Results

The staff of a Santa Clara Valley school district recently explored this thesis by participating in a success analysis seminar which was in turn evaluated as to its implications. The seminar evaluation instructions requested that the respondent mark whether he agreed (A), disagreed (D), or had no knowledge or opinion (?) concerning the issue described in each item. The evaluation comprised twenty items descriptive of perceptions and feelings of participants concerning the seminar. Two open-ended questions requested the respondents to list practical applications of the concepts or methods of the seminar (Item 21), and to describe the

least or most satisfactory features of the seminar (Item 22). The number of responses divided by the total possible number of responses, multiplied by one hundred yielded percentages for each response mode.

The results are presented in the following Table. The items were ranked according to amount of agreement from highest to lowest. Thus, those items which received the highest percentages in the agree (A) category are at the top of the list; those which ranked low in agreement or which constituted issues about which the respondents had no knowledge or were undecided are found toward or at the bottom of the list.

/Table here/

Generally, the participants in the seminar agreed that successes and failures are not accidental, and that an analysis of both yield valuable personal insights and appreciation of others /Items 1, 2, 3, 5/. A high percentage of participants (94%) agreed that knowledge of strengths, needs, and values is important to the setting and probably successful accomplishment of goals /Items 14, 19, 8/. Over one-half of the respondents thought that their strengths were identified as a result of the strength bombardment process /Item 8/, while over forty percent were either undecided or disagreed that seminar methods were useful for the identification of crucial needs or clarification of values /Items 11,

TABLE OF EVALUATION RESULTS

No.	Item	Percentages A	?	D
1	learn from one's failures	100	-	-
2	learn from one's successes	100	-	-
3	successes & failures are <u>not</u> accidental	100	-	-
9	can build on strengths	100	-	-
18	seminar source of free and open communication	100	-	-
14	knowledge of strengths, needs, & values important to goal-setting	94	6	-
5	seminar source of valuable insights and appreciation of others	86	14	-
4	success analysis is effective method for understanding others	80	20	-
6	'sharing' portion effective means for interpersonal communication	80	20	-
7	'sharing' is useful strategy for inter-cultural communication	80	20	-
19	small group process effective for discovering one's potential	80	14	6
12	aware and accepting of personal values of others	66	20	14
8	my strengths identified through 'strength bombardment'	53	27	20
17	gained valuable insights about myself	46	27	27
15	'comfort zone' goal setting important for facilitating change	41	59	-
20	objectives of seminar	35	59	6
11	clarification of personal values	27	41	32
13	better able to set forth realizable goals	14	59	27
16	grasp of new concepts	14	59	27
10	identification of crucial needs	6	41	53

10/. A higher percent agreement by participants on "clarification of personal values" /Item 11/ over "identification of crucial needs" /Item 10/ may be the result of an under-emphasis of some components in the seminar. Need-identification exercises were left for individuals to accomplish on their own, at their own pace. (It should be noted that such procedures are compatible with the voluntary participation posture of the seminar.) Value-clarification procedures received not only more emphasis by trainers, but more time and discussion in this area were required by participants. Nevertheless, these results indicate that a more judicious use of time and emphasis may have resulted in more positive results in the areas of need-identification and value-clarification.

An area indicative of perhaps an unwarranted assumption is an instance of presuming that what appears obvious to trainers, must also appear obvious to participants. Thus, over one-half of the respondents (59%) indicated that they were either undecided or unsure concerning the objectives of the seminar /Item 20/. This, notwithstanding a short lecture describing point by point the objectives of the seminar, and a seminar hand-out descriptive of the interrelations of the various components of the seminar. Nevertheless, such results indicate perhaps a difference in the perceptions of the participants regarding the expected outcomes of the seminar in relation to district and school concerns regarding multicultural education directions and applications.

Partially offsetting these perceptions, however, and indicative of highly positive results were the respondents' agreement 1) that the seminar was a source of free and open communication [Item 18, 100%]; 2) that 'sharing' is an effective strategy for both interpersonal and intercultural communication [Items 6, 7, 80%]; and 3) that the small group processes of the seminar were effective means for discovering and realizing one's potential [Item 19, 80%] and becoming more aware and accepting of the values of others [Item 12, 66%].

These results are indicative, as well, of the participants' willingness to assume risks. Because of the nonthreatening posture of the seminar which created a supportive rather than defensive climate, free and open communication could occur. The fact that eighty percent of the respondents thought that success analysis was an effective method for understanding others supports such a conclusion [Item 47].

Finally, it should be noted that responses to those items concerned with the setting of goals probably reflect both fatigue, and the emergence of more crucial organizational and individual concerns of the participants [Items 15, 13]. A discussion of district concerns was perceived by the participants to be more pertinent. Consequently, the goal-setting exercises did not receive the anticipated emphasis or planned analyses.

A sample of responses to Item 21, "List some of the practical applications of the concepts, ideas, or methods used in the Seminar" follows:

1. Use "sharing" and "strength bombardment" with staff.
2. Use seminar techniques as a means for parent-advisory dialogue in area of human relations.
3. Adapt procedures for classroom application.
4. Adapt techniques for planning purposes by administrative council.
5. Use seminar methods with new staff during orientation.
6. Use value exercises with parents, teachers, and students.

A sample of responses to Item 22 of the evaluation form which asked, (a) "What did you like best about the Seminar?" follows:

(a) 1. learning more about co-workers;
2. appreciated the informality;
3. positive approach;
4. enjoyable exercises;
5. personal interaction exercises;
6. knowledge gained in terms of the new techniques in communication;
7. away from district; and
8. low-key and convincing.

And, (b) "What did you like least?"

(b) 1. advance hand-outs could have been more explicit;
2. somewhat uncomfortable physical environment;
3. needed more time to discuss concerns in district; and
4. relation of seminar to multicultural education merited further discussion.

Applications to Multicultural Education

The following are recommendations for applying the success analysis seminar methods to multicultural education. It was suggested that the approach can be used:

-- for an analysis of the literature about Asians, Mexican Americans, Blacks and other ethnic groups in terms of the strengths, needs, and values which are perceived to be operative in their depicted experiences;

-- as an assessment method in determining parent perceptions of their children/students' strength-need-value system;

-- as a strategy for either setting or assessing goals in multicultural programs;

-- as an evaluation-planning outline to determine organizational strengths, needs, and values for purposes of achieving specific goals in multicultural education;

-- as a strategy for reviewing and evaluating a school's curriculum in terms of the perspective of the strengths, needs, and values of its predominant ethnic group population;

-- as a method for improving interpersonal and intergroup communication in the organization, particularly in the orientation process for teachers, parents in the district, or staff;

-- to identify possible sources of interpersonal or intergroup conflicts in a school serving more than one ethnic group population;

-- to introduce and describe the various kinds of

conflict management styles (value-clarification portion of the seminar);

-- as a diagnostic tool (or aid) in an analysis of the successes/failures of existing multicultural programs; and

-- as a special unit in the multicultural education curriculum.

The fact that success analysis has both individual and group application stands in its favor as a device with broad, practical relevance for school administrators. When applied to an ethnic/culture group, the success analysis approach can be used to identify a group's own perception of what are considered to be 1) important strengths of the group, 2) crucial needs of the group, and 3) important values of the group. Initially, this may be accomplished from the point of view of what are considered to be successes or failures, but utilized to its full potential, success analysis will lead to a better understanding of the life-style of the group. This includes an examination of the group's rhetoric, uses of language, kinds of disagreement (agreement), problem-solving approaches, management of conflict styles, uses and abuses of stereotypes, and prevalent coping strategies. In short, success analysis is equal to the task of life-style analysis!

Summary

In sum, this report narrates the results of the efforts of a school district's administrative staff to create a more supportive approach for the free and open communication of

of district and school concerns in the area of multicultural education. The results indicate that the success analysis approach was highly successful in the areas of free and open interpersonal and intercultural communication; valuable personal insights; acceptance and appreciation of the personal values of others; and, in general, a better understanding of self and others. Less successful areas were related to need-identification, value-clarification, and goal-setting -- probably due to inequities in emphasis and time, perhaps inadvertently and inaccurately suggesting areas of lesser importance for participants.

We live in age of almost ceaseless change wherein we are often constrained to engage in decision-making without the benefit of precedent. In such a world the old ways tend to be as obstinate as death. New programs are often viewed with suspicion, if not outright hostility, when perceived as deleterious to the stability zones human beings require for their well-being.

Change, then, needs to be made as painless as possible. Success analysis constitutes a cooperative, change-facilitating approach which, if utilized by educators, will not only make change as painless as possible, but do so in a constructive way!

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